

# The IDVA Update



## KERNAN ANNOUNCES \$850,000 IN FUNDING FOR VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES

By: Tina Dennis Noel

(Indianapolis) – Hoosier veterans will benefit from \$850,000 awarded to the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD) for employment and training services, Lt. Governor Joe Kernan announced today.

Indiana is one of only nine states sharing in \$6.3 million from the US Department of Labor, and expects to provide services for 350 veterans with its portion of the funding. Seventy percent of those 350

veterans will be enrolled in skills training that will lead to high-wage jobs.

"These grant funds will create more training opportunities directly for veterans through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in Indiana," said Kernan, a Navy veteran who was held as a prisoner of war while serving in Vietnam. "Whether it's a serviceman or woman who's looking to get back into the workforce after returning from the Middle East, or an older veteran who's looking to change careers, this will go a long way toward helping the folks who have devoted themselves to defending our country."

The Department of Labor grant involves seven Workforce Investment Areas in 35 counties in Indiana. Veterans who will receive services include 245 campaign/wartime, 70 service-connected disabled, 35 recently separated and 42 economically disadvantaged.

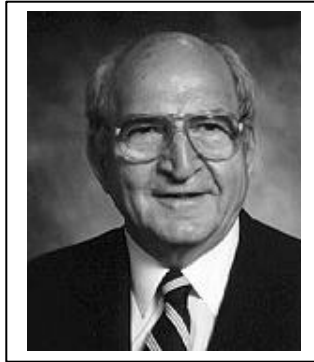
The grant funds will be administered by DWD. The services, which will be provided by Workforce Development and the Interlocal Association, will also include career counseling and job placement assistance.

"Workforce Development staff will play a key role in the success of this project by identifying eligible veterans and helping those veterans who complete training find suitable employment," said DWD Commissioner Craig Harzter. "By utilizing this grant, we may be able to free up some dollars in the regular WIA programs to be used to provide training for other eligible program participants," Harzter added.

Goals for the initiative include job placement by June 30, 2003, and increased services for minority veterans. Eligible veterans are those with an honorable discharge and there is no residency requirement.

For more information on the Workforce Investment Act or related policies and programs, contact the Indiana Department of Workforce Development at 1-888-WorkOne or visit the agency's website at [www.workforce.IN.gov](http://www.workforce.IN.gov)

## Representative Ben Gia Quinta to chair Military and Veterans Affairs Committee



Representative Ben Gia Quinta, D- Ft. Wayne, is the Chairperson of the Military and Veterans Affairs Committee for this session of the Indiana General assembly.

Representative Gia Quinta is a veteran of WWII with a long record of support for veterans issues in the state of Indiana.

The remaining members of the committee are:

Rep. Claire Leuck  
Rep. Robert Alderman  
Rep. James Atterholt  
Sen. Allen Paul  
Sen. Thomas Wyss  
Sen. William Alexa  
Sen. Allie Craycraft  
John Dahman  
Terry Smith  
David Miller  
James Brown

### Staff:

Peggy Piety, Attorney for the Commission  
Chris Baker, Fiscal Analyst for the Commission

## Sick Agent Orange vets owed benefits - U.S. court

A U.S. appeals court in California has ruled that Vietnam veterans who contracted prostate cancer and diabetes after exposure to Agent Orange should get retroactive disability payments, setting legal precedent that could cover a wide range of illnesses associated with the toxic defoliant.

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed a lower court ruling that held the United States Department of Veterans Affairs incorrectly interpreted rules to deny retroactive payments to veterans who filed claims after early 1994. The court held that the VA was bound under the terms of a 1991 consent decree to pay the benefits, in many cases back to the date the veteran first claimed them.

The ruling marked a victory for advocates who have been seeking compensation and care for tens of thousands of Vietnam veterans who have fallen sick after battlefield exposure to Agent Orange, a herbicide that contains the known carcinogen dioxin.

The National Veterans Legal Services Program, which filed the initial Agent Orange suit in 1986, said the court's decision would guarantee payments to an estimated 1,200 veterans with Agent Orange-related prostate cancer, as well as thousands more who suffer from adult-onset diabetes.

In both cases, the VA had sought to deny retroactive payments on the grounds that the diseases' connection with Agent Orange was not scientifically established when payment regulations were promulgated in 1994.

More than 9 million gallons of Agent Orange was sprayed on Vietnam between 1962 and 1970. The herbicide has been linked with at least 10 diseases, including lung cancer, prostate cancer and diabetes.

Scientists are also probing possible links between Agent Orange and childhood leukemia among children of Vietnam veterans, while the government of Vietnam has blamed Agent Orange for causing many thousands of birth defects in Vietnam and demanded compensation.

After Agent Orange was found to cause cancer in laboratory rats, the U.S. military suspended its use in 1970 and halted all herbicide spraying in Vietnam the following year.

## New Mastectomy Compensation Regulation Issued

VA Press Release

WASHINGTON -- The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has issued a final regulation that awards special monthly compensation to women veterans with service-related loss of one or both breasts.

Such anatomic losses may include simple, modified or radical mastectomies. The regulation is based on provisions of the Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2000. Federal law provides a special monthly benefit of \$80 for certain service-related disabilities suffered by veterans.

This special benefit is paid in addition to VA's regular disability compensation. To qualify, recipients must have their conditions officially recognized by VA as being "service-connected." In addition to loss of breasts, this special benefit is paid for a variety of other anatomical losses and for certain conditions affecting speech, hearing and sight.

VA estimates it will receive about 600 cases over five years, at an estimated cost of \$2.9 million.

The new regulation became effective March 18, 2002.

## Tricare For Life And Identification Cards

By: James Tichacek

Questions continue to arise regarding the need to reissue military ID Cards since TRICARE For Life is a lifetime entitlement. The TRICARE Management Activity (TMA) has launched a campaign to ensure eligible TFL beneficiaries are aware of the DEERS enrollment requirement, are enrolled with the appropriate Medicare coverage information and have a current military ID Card reflecting their TRICARE coverage after age 65. The following is applicable to you and /or your dependents:

**MILITARY SPONSORS:** Get a new ID Card if the backside of your UNITED STATES UNIFORMED SERVICES RETIRED CARD (DD FORM 2 (RETIRED)) reflects "No" Civilian Medical Care Authorized after a specified date and you have Medicare Part A and Part B coverage. This is a change from formerly TFL published information.

**FAMILY MEMBERS** holding the UNIFORMED SERVICES IDENTIFICATION AND PRIVILEGE CARD (DD FORM 1173) must be updated on the person's 65th

birthday. Be sure to take your Medicare Card reflecting Part A and B coverage with you when applying. DD Form 1173 renewal is required even if it is earlier than the normal four-year expiration date of the current card. The basis for the reissue of ID Cards was explained in a 16 August 2002, TRICARE Management Activity message that states, "...achieving the age of 65 and becoming eligible for Medicare is a significant event that can disrupt TRICARE benefits. Therefore, it is extremely important that a beneficiary's relationship to their sponsor be current and verified in DEERS in order to determine eligibility for benefits. Additionally, other personal information must be up-to-date to include resident address, mailing address etc. This is also a mechanism for verifying that the beneficiary has purchased Medicare Part B. Medicare Part B is required for TRICARE For Life eligibility. [Source: NAUS Leg Up Newsletter 23 AUG 02]

## The Fall Conference

The Fall conference of County Veterans Service Officers with the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs will be held at the Headquarters of the Indiana National Guard, 2002 Holt Road, Indianapolis on Friday 11 October, 2002.

The meetings will be in the conference room of the headquarters building located on the northeast corner of inactive airbase known as Stout Field.

This years agenda will include discussions of the operation of the Community Based Outpatient Clinics in the State of Indiana, and the recent changes to the remission of fees program.

Details of the plan for the day are still being worked out We'll see you there.

## New Service Officers

I don't have pictures but these are the new County Veterans Service Officers who have joined our ranks this quarter.

Knox County, Kenney Newton, a retired United States Marine has relieved Hugh Wagoner as the Service officer in Knox county, Hugh has retired to pursue other interest.

Lake County, Ernie Dillon, has relieved Casmir Balt, as the Lake Co. Veteran Service Officer. Cas has retired to spend more time with family. Ernie served in the United States Air Force 1966 through 1968 at Albrook Air Field in Panama. After the Air Force, Ernie earned a Bachelor of Arts from St. Joseph's College in Hammond Indiana. He has served in government service positions in Northeast Indiana for the last 25 years. He is also a past commander of Post 168 of the American Legion.

There are three more new service officers and one temporary service officer. I have no information about these folks beyond the fact that they are serving in the positions now. They are; Dearborn Co, Bill Ewbank, Kosciusko Co, Michael Barnett, La Porte Co, John Wantuch, LaGrange County, Alan Coneley in Rush Co., Robert Brown is serving as interim service officer during the counties search for a new service officer.

## "VA's Lessons for All Americans about Sept. 11"

By Anthony J. Principi,  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

The war on terrorism is raging within many of us. This is part of a phenomenon that combat veterans of all wars have seen. But now large numbers of American civilians are experiencing it, too.

Those of us from the "boomer generation" grew up with the war in Vietnam. We had family and friends who went. Some of us went and were changed forever. For others, the difficulties that began with the homecoming continue today. They are still struggling toward a healthy readjustment back to their families, communities and a feeling of safety.

In decades of clinical services, compassionate care and outreach, plus government research and development, we have learned much about combat trauma. In 1979, drawing upon those years of experience, VA created the Readjustment Counseling program - commonly known as Vet Centers - to help combat veterans in their own communities. The Department of Veterans Affairs has a comprehensive system of hospital-based programs serving our nation's veterans who suffer from combat trauma.

Now, people who were on the streets of New York City, in halls of the Pentagon, or in the fields of Somerset County, Pennsylvania, and saw the violence last year on Sept. 11 are encountering many of the problems that combat vets experience. Few, I'm sure, have related their experiences to "combat," but they have survived an attack by a lethal enemy.

They should know that, through long experiences treating combat veterans at the VA, we know what will work to help. In fact, support groups and specialists and entire organizations exist to help those affected to cope in a healthy way. We know that normal reactions to the experience of combat include things as simple as trouble sleeping, intrusive images, emotional distancing, problems with intimacy, heightened awareness and startle responses.

The impact on the human psyche of witnessing what happened on September 11 is enormous. It is impossible to process easily, and then neatly compartmentalize, the horror of that day. If you lost a loved one, friend or co-worker, trauma is compounded by grief. These two emotional reactions are very different experiences, but are occurring simultaneously, and without an understanding of the impact, the combination is almost impossible to cope with.

VA has for decades successfully helped veterans recognize that much can be done to help with readjustment after trauma exposure. In some cases, we have found that sitting with a trained combat veteran at a Vet Center and being in a safe place to share fears is enough to validate and then normalize reactions. In other instances, just knowing that we are not "going crazy," that our reactions are the natural defenses of our own minds and bodies activated to protect us, is enough to provide relief.

Since Sept. 11, you may be struggling with lingering fears, you may find yourself ducking or flinching when an airliner passes overhead, you may start to sweat when you board a flight, you may find that you are shutting yourself off from those closest to you, or you may not be able to enter a high rise or sit by a window. These are normal reactions - the responses of your mind and body to keep you safe. But they may intrude on your daily life and cripple your ability to readjust in a healthy way. Some may fear that if they "heal," that if their pain eases, they will stop honoring those who have died. One veteran sums his experience this way, "I see Joe in my mind often. Occasionally, I speak to him, but I know he

won't answer. Over the years, the sound of his voice has faded from my memory."

"However, nothing has dimmed the memory of his brilliant smile and the sparkling eyes so common in vibrant young men," this vet continues. "Because he lives only in my mind, he looks exactly like he did when I saw him last, at our high school in June of 1966."

We do not forget. We have seen with our Vietnam veterans that they continue to honor and remember their fallen comrades, and in that way, those we love do not ever truly leave us.

If veterans are experiencing difficulties since Sept. 11, there is help available at VA. For others, help is available if they reach out to their religious leaders, doctors, counselors, teachers or social workers. Everyone can learn more about the after effects of trauma by visiting VA's National Center for PTSD Web site at [www.ncptsd.org](http://www.ncptsd.org).

VA has learned so much from those who have been on the front lines and survived horrific events. That expertise is available to everyone who feels the effects of last fall's attack on America. There is help. There is understanding. There are tools that can bring you back to a healthy, satisfying life.

## **Louisville VAMC seeks Volunteers to participate in Treatment Trials**

The Louisville VA Medical Center is seeking men to participate in two clinical trials to help determine the effectiveness of treatments.

The first of the two studies is called SELECT, which is an acronym for Selenium and Vitamin E Cancer Prevention Trial. This trial, sponsored by the National Cancer Institute and managed by the South West Oncology Group, plans to enroll about 33,000 men throughout North America and about forty VA Medical Centers will be participating.

The goal of SELECT is to see if taking Selenium and or vitamin E will prevent Prostate Cancer. Prostate Cancer kills about 700 men in Indiana alone each year.

To participate, men will need to enroll, which will require two visits to the hospital. While in the trial the men will take vitamin E, and or Selenium or a placebo ( a fake pill that looks like the vitamin or the selenium ) and may obtain a multi-vitamin that doesn't contain the test supplements. They will be seen at the hospital once every 6 months to refill the supplements and get a brief exam. SELECT will be the largest cancer prevention trial in the history of the National Cancer Institute.

In order to participate in the second study, called PREADVICE, which stands for Prevention of Alzheimer's Disease with Vitamin E and Selenium, you must be enrolled in SELECT first. In addition the man must be at least 62 (60 for African Americans and other ethnic minorities). These men will be given a memory- screening test each year during their SELECT visit.

For any questions you may have regarding these clinical trials please e-mail Dr. Patricia Quiggins at [patricia.quiggins@med.va.gov](mailto:patricia.quiggins@med.va.gov).

## **Online System Speeds Up Veterans' Home Loan Processing**

VA press Release

WASHINGTON – A new federal Internet-based system for mortgage bankers and other lenders will speed up the processing of home loans for veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

After the veteran's information is entered by the financial institution providing the loan, the lender will receive a certificate authenticating the veteran's eligibility in seconds. Previously, when a certificate of eligibility was needed, a form was submitted to VA and the certificate was mailed, a process that can take a week or more.

"This leap forward in VA automation is great news for the veteran anxious to close a loan and move into a new home," said VA Under Secretary for Benefits Daniel L. Cooper. "When interest rates begin to change, getting loan procedures resolved quickly can be important to our veterans."

The new system, called Automated Certificate of Eligibility (ACE), should be especially beneficial for active-duty members and veterans who are using their home loan benefit for the first time.

Last year VA guaranteed more than 250,000 loans valued at \$31.2 billion. Approximately 80 percent of these loans require a certificate of eligibility. VA anticipates the ACE system will be able to generate a certificate for 30 to 50 percent of these loans. However, some loans will still require manual processing by VA, including veterans whose eligibility is based on National Guard or Reserve service, those with irregular discharges and those in several other situations.

Where the new electronic system is used, the eligibility certificate will be printed from the lender's computer and it will be customized, bearing the date and lender's name as well as a unique authorization number. For the veteran, that represents a change from the traditional certificate process in which the veteran often kept a copy of the certificate of eligibility to take to a prospective lender.

The ACE system will not reject any veterans for home loans and lenders will not be involved in deciding any eligibility issues. A veteran whose eligibility involves special issues requiring the traditional staff review may still request a certificate of eligibility in advance of approaching a bank or mortgage company with a loan application by sending in VA Form 26-1880, Request for Determination of Eligibility for VA Home Loan Benefits.

All lenders participating in the VA loan guaranty program have access to the system. Veterans or servicemembers interested in learning more about their VA home loan benefits or who wish to obtain forms may visit [www.homeloans.va.gov](http://www.homeloans.va.gov) on the Internet.

## State Approving Agency Update

By Steve Steed

In 1996, the IDVA State Approving Agency (SAA) was one of the lead agencies to push for an exemption to the federal regulation which would allow governmental training programs to be approved allowing eligible trainees to use their GI Bill education benefits in approved law enforcement programs. Specifically, this allowed the SAA to waive the pay raise during training requirement. This was signed into law in 1997 and allowed our SAA to go from 3 to over 100 approved law enforcement training programs within the state.

At first we thought this would solve our problem but then another issue was discovered. About 20% of the training programs within the state do not give a pay raise at the end of the training program and the SAA was prohibited from approving these programs in accordance with the regulation. For the past two and a half years, the IDVA SAA has been working this issue to allow us to approve training programs whether they gave a pay raise or not. Support from Richard Dyer, VARO Education Liaison Representative and letters from Bill Jackson, IDVA Director, John Piper III (formerly of the SAA), and coordination by Kenneth McIntosh were instrumental in this process. More recently and working directly with Angie Roman of Senator Richard Lugar's Office here in Indianapolis, queries were sent, received and resubmitted for consideration to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Central Office in Washington.

On August 14, 2002, the VA responded to Senator Lugar's second letter with a positive response. What this does is allow the IDVA SAA to approve most, if not all, governmental training programs whether they give a pay raise at the end of training or not. It is estimated that this will allow between 25-50 additional veterans to use their GI Bill educational benefits in these newly approved programs. A job well done for all those involved.

## POW/MIA Conference

Rolling Thunder, Indiana Chapter One, is sponsoring their first POW/MIA conference on November 9, 2002 from 1PM till 5PM at American Legion Post 18 in Bloomington, IN. the conference will present information on the fate of missing American Prisoners from WWI to the present.

Speakers for the afternoon will include Dr. Joseph D. Douglass, Jr. of Falls Church VA. Dr. Douglass authored the book "Betrayed" which is based in part on the Doctors debrief of Soviet defector Major General Sejna, the highest ranking Soviet Officer ever to defect to the west. The General provided first hand knowledge of Americans listed as missing but held as POW's inside the Soviet Union.

Additional speakers include Captain D.L. Hicks US Army retired, who served in special operations units in both Korea and Vietnam. And Major Renee' DeFournieux, U.S. Army Retired who escaped from Nazi occupied France, joined the US Military and was recruited into the OSS, which became the CIA where he worked for 22

years. Major DeFourneaux wrote "Winking Fox" and Tracks of the Fox".

Following the conference there will be a buffet dinner after which Dr. Douglass and Major DeFourneaux will be signing their books.

If you plan to attend please contact Ron Jolly at 812 825 9561 or e-mail him at [ronjolly101@yahoo.com](mailto:ronjolly101@yahoo.com) or Judy Brinkley at 317 875 7600 or e-mail her at [triscooter@aol.com](mailto:triscooter@aol.com) not later than October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2002.

American Legion Post 18 is at 1800 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Bloomington, IN Call them at 812 334 0500

## Grant Established for Wheelchair Game Participant

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced creation of an annual grant up to \$1,000 to pay the expenses of one veteran each year to National Veterans Wheelchair Games.

The grant, named the Michael Rosenberg Athletic Award, was established by Robin L. Higgins, under secretary of memorial affairs, in honor of her grandfather, a World War I veteran.

"I grew up with stories of the sacrifice and daily struggle of my grandfather, who lost both legs and an arm due to an illnesses contracted after returning from the war," Higgins said. "The men and women who take part in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games embody the spirit of patriotism, self-sacrifice and guts."

Her grandfather, Michael "Red" Rosenberg, was raised in Long Branch, N.J. He served in the 27th Aero Squadron from 1917-1919. He was treated in military hospitals and VA facilities after losing his legs and an arm to disease. He died in 1933 at the age of 34.

The grant will go to a first-time athlete receiving treatment in a VA facility who would be unable to participate in the Wheelchair Games without financial assistance. The selection will be made by VA's under secretary for health.

## VA Moves To Simplify Communications On Claims Decisions

WASHINGTON – To improve communications with veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has told its field facilities to write decisions on applications for financial benefits with minimal jargon and legal citations.

"It is vital that veterans get good, quality decisions on their claims that they can understand," VA Under Secretary for Benefits Daniel L. Cooper told employees in a nationwide satellite telecast.

"Clarity and readability of claims decisions are as important as the accuracy of those decisions," Adm. Cooper said. "If the veterans cannot easily understand, then they will not be satisfied and they will believe that we are not serving them properly."

More than 90 percent of veterans or survivors accept VA's initial decisions for disability compensation, pension and other benefits. Where a veteran writes VA that he or she disagrees with a decision, VA then supplies a more lengthy explanation, called a "statement of the case." This statement may include legal references and citations to regulations.

Under a policy enacted last year, when VA receives a letter appealing a decision, officials automatically reconsider the case. An official not previously involved in the case provides a top-to-bottom review of the claim.

VA hopes that fewer claims will advance to an unnecessary appeal if VA explains clearly to veterans why an application for benefits did not meet legal requirements. For example, for disability compensation, generally there must be evidence to show that the veteran's serious chronic condition today can be associated in some way with the time the veteran was on active duty.

Thousands of pages of laws, VA regulations and court interpretations guide VA's regional offices in making decisions on claims. Medical judgments routinely are requested from physicians to determine the severity of a condition, and a VA claims representative must evaluate how the medical findings, records and other evidence mesh with the regulatory schedule used for disability ratings.

VA makes such rating decisions in about 700,000 applications a year. With veterans typically claiming two or more medical problems in each filing, VA claims representatives will decide more than 1.5 million issues affecting veterans' incomes this year.

Under the new policy on clarity, field offices will summarize the facts pertinent to a decision and explain clearly how they evaluated the information provided by the veteran.

In addition to providing reasons for the decision and a summary of the relevant evidence, VA field officials provide veterans with information about a right to a hearing and to representation. They also

explain the procedure for obtaining a review of the decision so that the veteran may make a well-informed choice about whether to appeal.

If the VA's evaluation of a condition results in less than the maximum payment rate for a disability or has an effective date for payments that is less than full retroactivity to the date of separation from service, VA will explain what the veteran would need to get the next highest rating or an earlier effective date for payment.